

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BORDEA 00032 211147Z
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SUBJECT: THE FRENCH LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN THE SOUTH WEST

IF THE 19 DEPARTMENTS OF THE BORDEAUX CONSULAR DISTRICT HAVE
ANY COMMON POLITICAL DENOMINATOR, IT IS DISTRUST OF PARIS.
THERE IS A DESIRE OF PEOPLE TO HAVE MORE SAY IN THEIR OWN
DESTINY COMBINED, IRONICALLY, WITH A BELIEF THAT PARIS HAS
NOT GIVEN SUFFICIENT PRIORITY TO THE NEEDS OF THEIR AREA.

INDIVIDUALISM AND OLD FASHIONED RADICALISM ARE PERVASIVE INFLUENCES.
THESE SOMETIMES MAKE POSSIBLE THE ELECTION OF RADICAUX DE GAUCHE
RADICALS OR INDEPENDANT CANDIDATES BEARING ONLY A LOCAL OR
REGIONAL STANDARD. THOUGH THE SOCIALISTS AND THE RPR HAVE STRONG
ORGANIZED SUPPORT, MANY OF THEIR VOTERS ARE VAGUELY DISSATISFIED
WITH THEIR PROGRAMS, PROMISES AND PERFORMANCE AND MAY BE EASILY
DISTRACTED TO A NEW AND ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATE OF ANOTHER FORMATION.

THE SOUTH WEST IS NOT A PARTICULARLY HOSPITABLE TERRAIN FOR THE
COMMUNISTS, THOUGH SOME HAVE BEEN ELECTED. THERE ARE A GREAT
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PAGE 02 BORDEA 00032 211147Z

MANY SOCIALIST VOTERS WHO ARE NOT MARXIST OR COLLECTIVIST.
THEY, LIKE THEIR RADICAUX DE GAUCHE TEAM MATES AND MANY OTHERS,
WANT CHANGE, INCLUDING A FAIRER DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND
INFLUENCE AMONG ECONOMIC CLASSES. - BUT NOT AT ANY PRICE.

CURRENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE SOUTH WEST ALSO FAVOR CHANGE
IN THIS CONNECTION THERE ARE TWO POINTS WHICH MUST BE KEPT IN

MIND: 1) THE SOUTH WEST IS STILL MORE HEAVILY RURAL THAN MOST OTHER PARTS OF FRANCE. THE RURAL POPULATION HAS ITS PROBLEMS, BUT IT IS LESS IMMEDIATELY INFLUENCED BY PERIODS OF PROSPERITY OR DEPRESSION IN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE. THE RURAL OR QUASI-RURAL POPULATION HAS SUFFERED LESS FROM UNEMPLOYMENT. THIS POPULATION IS NOT CONSERVATIVE BUT, ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS NOT IMPRESSED BY COLLECTIVIST PROMISES. IT WILL MOST OFTEN VOTE FOR A MAN, OF WHATEVER PARTY, WHO SEEMS TO HAVE THE INTERESTS OF THE DISTRICT AT HEART. 2) MUCH OF THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF THE SOUTH WEST IS RECENT AND FRAGILE. THE INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION OF THE LATE 60S AND EARLY 70S ASSUMED NATIONAL PROSPERITY AND IT HAS BEEN HIT HARD BY THE NATIONAL SLUMP. IN PARTICULAR, MECHANICAL INDUSTRIES, THE AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY AND THE PAPER INDUSTRY HAVE BEEN HIT HARD AND HAVE SUFFERED CLOSEDOWNS AND UNEMPLOYMENT. IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THESE PROBLEMS ARE LIKELY TO VOTE LEFT. THERE IS A THIRD, STRUCTURAL FACTOR, ALREADY EVIDENT IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS LAST YEAR AND IN THE CANTONAL ELECTIONS OF '76, WHICH WILL INFLUENCE THE VOTE IN THE SOUTH WEST THIS YEAR. THIS IS THE SPREADING OF THE WORKING POPULATION TO THE SUBURBS AND THE COUNTRYSIDE. AN EXAMPLE OF THIS IS FOUND IN THE TRADITIONALLY CONSERVATIVE -RURAL 10TH DISTRICT OF THE GIRONDE, IN WHICH THE SOCIALIST CANDIDATE IS GIVEN A GOOD CHANCE TO WIN THIS YEAR. THE SAME PHENOMENON IS EVIDENT AROUND TOULOUSE, LIMOGES, POITIERS, ANGOULEME AND EVEN IN THE FORMERLY 'SAFE' CONSERVATIVE STRONGHOLD OF LA ROCHE-SUR-YON IN THE VENDEE.

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PAGE 03 BORDEA 00032 211147Z

ALL THIS LEADS TO SOME PREDICTIONS FOR THE SOUTH WEST:

- 1) THE SOCIALISTS WILL MAKE IMPORTANT GAINS
- 2) THE RADICAUX DE GAUCHE WILL HOLD THEIR OWN
- 3) THE COMMUNISTS WILL NOT MAKE ANY IMPORTANT GAINS

EVIDENTLY, THE MAJORITY WILL LOSE SEATS. THE QUESTION IS, WHICH SEATS? MOST OFTEN THE SEATS LOST SHOULD BE THOSE OF OLD TIME RPR REGULARS. NEW FACES AND KNOWN PERSONALITIES WHO, THOUGH OF THE MAJORITY, REFLECT IMAGINATION AND OPENNESS TO CHANGE WILL HAVE A BETTER CHANCE.

THE QUESTION OF SECOND ROUND SUPPORT OF THE CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT WHO RECEIVES THE MOST VOTES ON THE FIRST ROUND HAS RATHER SPECIAL MEANING IN THE SOUTH-WEST. MOST COMMUNISTS, WHATEVER THEIR PARTY TELLS THEM, WILL VOTE FOR THE SOCIALIST OR RG CANDIDATE AFTER THEIR MAN IS DEFEATED. SOCIALIST REGULARS ALSO WILL USUALLY FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTE FOR A WINNING COMMUNIST. BUT THERE WILL BE VERY VERY MANY PEOPLE WHO VOTE FOR A SOCIALIST OR RG CANDIDATE IN THE FIRST ROUND WHO WILL REFUSE TO VOTE FOR A COMMUNIST IN THE SECOND. THESE PEOPLE WILL EITHER ABSTAIN OR

VOTE FOR THE MAJORITY CANDIDATE IN THE SECOND ROUND.

FINALLY -- THE UNPREDICTABLE. THERE IS A PARTICULARLY LARGE
UNDECIDED VOTE IN THE SOUTH-WEST. IF EVENTS PROCEED RELATIVELY
CALMLY UNTIL THE ELECTIONS, A MAJORITY OF THE UNDECIDED WILL
VOTE LEFT. HOWEVER, IF THE MAJORITY CAN RAISE ISSUES WHICH
WILL SHOCK OR SCARE THEM, THEY MAY VOTE FOR THE TRIED AND TRUE.
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